FOUNDATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

بنیاد انکشاف دهات - دکلیو دپراختیا بنسټ

SPRING 1993

**Start up
of
social welfare activities
by
rural development centers**



A PROGRAMME SUPPORTED BY COORDINATION OF AFGAN RELIEF - CoAR

PR-111

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COORDINATION OF AFGHAN RELIEF
CoAR

2ND QUARTERLY NARRATIVE

REPORT

JUNE 1993

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

CoAR was founded at the end of 1989 with the aim of distributing an appropriate aid to Afghanistan which would lead to the possibility of the long term aid based on local community development.

The work of CoAR over the last three years, leading to the setting up of the Foundation for Rural Development and Rural Development Centers was presented in the first quartely report published by CoAR in March 1993*.

Without repeating the whole of this report, it is nevertheless worth recalling that at the Sayedabad conference in October 1992, the offices of CoAR determined three objectives to be met by the RDCs which had been created in 1991 :

1. to improve cost/efficiency ratio.

2. to improve the mid-term capacity for self-financing.

3. to improve project impact of least favoured groups.

CoAR's experience showed indeed that the rural rehabilitation program carried out over the last three years benefited the least favoured groups only indirectly, in so far as they allowed a general improvement in the economic situation in areas affected by the projects.
After repeated requests by local communities, it was therefore decided to undertake programs to benefit these sections of the population.
Three target population were selected as a priority : women, children, widows.

It is worth noticing that, given the diversity of local conditions, it was left to the discretion of each RDC manager to determine the conditions of setting up the social welfare centers and the cost of centralizing aid to least favoured groups.
Thus, in practice, in the spring 1993, these social welfare activities started up in three directions :

1. two new experiments in the field of education and health, launched by Shashqala RDC.

2. start up of activities to support war-widows by each RDC.

3. restarting and expanding the school building program by each RDC.

These three programs helped demonstrate relevance of the idea of integrated programs which were the basis for the creation of RDCs.

Moreover, the systematical appeal to local resources both financial and managerial, the gradualist approach in setting up the programs, the enthousiasm showed by project officers and the keen interest showed by local populations in this type of program should all ensure the continuing success of these activities in future.

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* *Introducing the Foudation for Rural Development and Rural Development Centers, CoAR, Peshawar, 1993.*

The setting up of the social welfare programs will probably have played a crucial role in widening the base of local community support for the RDC and the inclusion of these communities in the RDC activities.
It is therefore a crucial step in the process of developing the RDCs as focuses for rual development.

This report will, first of all, briefly recapitulate the exposition of motives and working patterns of the RDCs and will then introduce each of the activities which followed the establishment of our RDC welfare centers in spring 1993.

I. RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The step by step setting up of Rural Development Center (RDC) between 1990 - 1993 is a consequence of the strategy adapted by CoAR end of 1989. The decision to implement integrated program stemmed, indeed, from logical and security concerns, it also led to considerable economics od scale.

It soon became clear that the integrated rehabilitation program under the auspices of an administrative center was to have a multiplicatory effect; more it afford step by step that it could be a real catalyst for the process of rural development in the villages servived by the center.

As a result, the regional administrative center created by CoAR in 1990 has slowely been converted into Rural Development Center which aim was to maximise benefits related to integration of activities in order to become effective centers for rural development.

I. 1. INTEGRATING ACTIVITIES.

CoAR's policy of integrated programs was in accord with the unique features of the rural environment in Afghanistan in the late 1980s.

Unique features of the rural environment
As mentioned in the report published by CoAR in January 1991* "the main task for Coordination of Afghan Relief is to prove itself capable of overcoming the following constraints: namely, extreme social fragmentation, the lack of effective mechanisms of collective decision-making and decision-implementation".
The war has indeed caused extreme social fragmentation which, added to the collapse of the State's administrative structures in the countryside, is a major reason for the failure of many NGOs to plan, carry out or monitor rehabilitation programs in rural Afghanistan.
These various constraints were reason enough to set up strong regional centers, whose initial role was to gather as detailed knowledge as possible of local social conditions, and thereby to lay the ground work for various technical programs. During implementation, these centers were also made responsible for centralizing communication and logistics.

In summary, one can say that these regional centers were determining factors in the reduction of risks and costs and thereby in the success of CoAR's projects.

Multiplicatory effect of integrating programs
It soon became clear that the integrated rehabilitation program under the auspices of an administrative center was to have a multiplicatory effect, thanks to:

- economies of scale achieved, as mentioned above
- dynamic cooperation between different programs
- benefits to each individual program from the considerable social impact of the project as a whole.

* *Kareze cleaning in Moqur, CoAR, Peshawar, 1991*

We have already mentioned economies of scale achieved for logistics ; equally evident are the benefits of dynamic cooperation achieved through integrated programs.
Dynamic cooperation has spread throughout the sphere of activities : the agronomists of each R.D.C. take active part in the A.A.E.C. trials, the engineers supervise experiments with appropriate technology, and both engineers and agronomists help to train field officers.
The RDC's organization increasingly relies on such dynamic cooperation (Cf organigram p.10).
The last and probably most important advantage of integrated program is that each activity benefits from a high degree of social acceptance of the project as a whole.
Considerable financial inputs are distributed by certain programs, which helps pursuade the local population to accept research and experiment work for which they usually have little interest.
In summary, the integrating of programs has had a multiplicatory effect both on the financial as welll as the social level.

Integration : the key to development

It has become increasingly clear that, as well as these three multiplicatory effect, integrated activities under the auspices of an effective administrative center could be a real catalyst for the process of rural development in the villages serviced by the center.
Quite apart from the positive impact of distributing inputs, the center's very presence was positive in itself. It soon became clear that the staff were not only transferring financial and material inputs to the local community but were also carrying out real "transfers of technology"* to the local population.
Indeed, the center soon showed itself to be an exceptional "community development activator"*.
The center's staff are very close to the population and the project are of a good technical standard and this has fostered an exceptional degree of confidence and trust between the center and the villages it serves.
The centers heve been redesigned during 1991in light of this realities.**

The center is thus organized around a simple idea:
external activators -engineers, agronomists, trainers- should ensure the good technical running of the project, thus allowing internal activators -field officers- to be more effective in their work with local communities. The quality of relationships between the field officers and the local community is now the heart of RDC's stategy and future.

* *For further details, see Faulkner and Albertson, 1986 and "village development, a proposal for a pilot project" by Albertson and Shinn, 1991.*

** *Among advices received that of M.L. Albertson was especially valuable.*

I.2 RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Practically, the RDC has been divided into three different departments.
1. The service Center: it is providing inputs to the community in the field of agriculture, engineering and training.
2. The credit agency: is managing the financial surplus gathered by the service center.
3. The welfare center: is managing a program aimed at improving life conditions of less favored groups.

During Sayed Abad conference; as above mentioned, three objective were set for this RDC:

1. To increase the cost/benefit ratio of RDCs
The better cost/benefit ratio would have to be achieved by:
1. a more efficient organization of the different departments in the center
2. increased local community participation in projects funded by the center (RDC)
3. Among the center's other works, priority should be given to income-generating activities.

1. The RDCs will in the course of 1993 be structured around three principal departments:
   - agriculture, which will remain the priority. However, outreach and extension will be given more importance than financial inputs.
   - engineering, where work will be redirected towards small scale village engineering with a higher degree of participation by the local community.
   - training, which will be strengthened and developed both for RDC employees and for the community.

2. increased local community participation in projects funded by the center (RDC)
This increased participation by the local community will be achieved by:
- sharp decrease in the subsidy of goods distributed by the center
- regular financial and material participation by the community in the framework of "contracts with community"

3. Priority given to income-generating activities of RDCs.
The development of income-generating activities, such as renting out tractors, is one of the key elements which should enable the project to become self-financing in the mid term.
The center's work has been redirected since 1992 towards potentially profit-making activities, and this will continue in 1993.

Profits thus made will be placed with the credit agency.

2. Organizing a credit agency
At the end of 1992, profits from different centers, once running costs had been deducted, were consolidated into a positive cash-flow as start-up for each RDC's credit agency.
Funds gathered should help to:
- create an investment savings fund,
- grant loans to individuals or local groups,
- to fund welfare activities (up to 25% of cash flow).

At the end of 1992, the two credit agencies had funds of 10,000$ US for Shash Qala RDC and 5,000$ US for Bakhtawar Shaheed RDC.
The creation of this cash-flow will be a key element in starting up activities of a social welfare nature, which is the first priority for 1993.

3. Increasing the activities of the welfare center
The activities of the rural development center are in the first place agricultural and economic, therefore less favoured groups, like women, widows, children, have hardly till now benefited directly from inputs supplied by the center. Theses groups will henceforth be a priority for RDCs.
It was therefore decided to open a welfare center in each RDC, to ensure positive discrimination in favour of less favoured groups.

Priority areas of work have been defined as follows:
- women: health
- children: health and primary education
- widows: material inputs and income-generating.

A pilot project for Expanded Program for Immunization (EPI) was launched in Sayedabad at the end of 1992 thanks to an agreement reached between CoAR and AVICEN on the funding and implementation of EPI activities south of Sayedabad.
Vaccination will be funded in part by the Shash Qala RDC credit agency, which will meet running costs and by AVICEN which will supply equipment and vaccines.
Vaccination will be carried out by a team of vaccinators employed by the Shash Qala RDC, trained and supervised by AVICEN.
One of the top priorities for 1993 will be to organize effective welfare center with or without partnership agreement, and partly funded by the Credit Agencies and local resources.

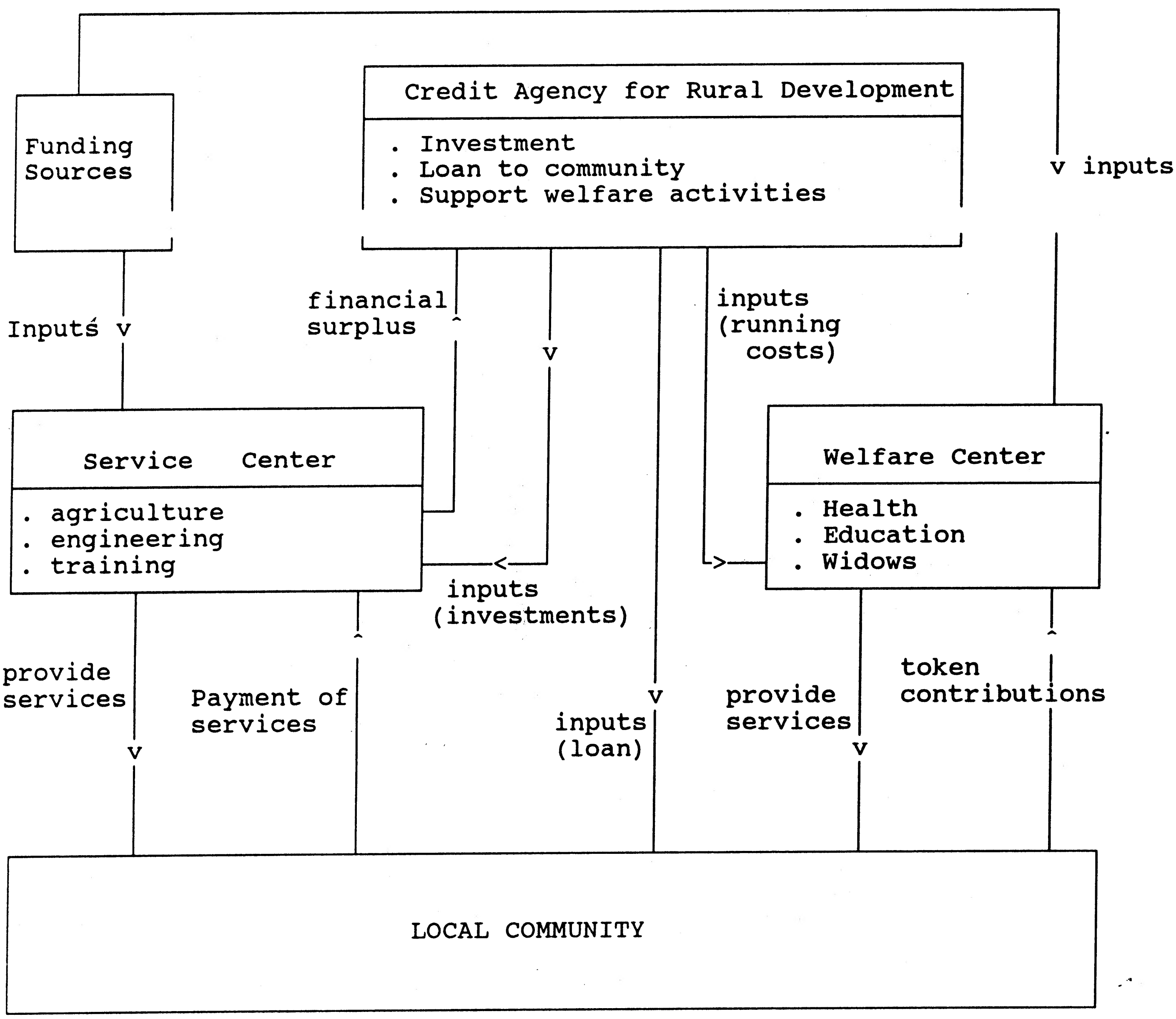
4. The Overall organigram of the RDCs, as shown on the following page, is a model which should be realized by the end of 1993.

It must be noted that the establishment of such a model will require:
- continuing considerable financial inputs
- technical cooperation by partners in those fields where CoAR has not been able to acquire its own skills.

FOUNDATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

ORGANIGRAM
(PLANNING 1992-1993)



II. SHASHQALA RDC : TWO NEW EXPERIMENTS FOR A PILOT PROJECT

The Shashqala Rural Development Center is working in the districts of Sayedabad and Zanakhan and was originally conceived as a pilot Rural Development Center. It was perfectly natural for it to be the first to set up a social welfare center.

The launching of this social welfare center in spring 1993 was accompanied by two new experiments.
These two experiments in the field of education and health should, each in its own perspective, demonstrate the usefulness of integrated programs and the relevance of the strategy underlying the establishment of the RDCs. In any case, they have been an important stage in the work of the RDCs.

The two most notable and original characteristics of these programs were :

- the absence of external funding. Indeed, these activities were funded by a grant made available by the RDC's own credit agency.

- the high level of motivation and initiative showed by the personnel of the RDCs, who have clearly shown themselves to be real "external activators" of the community.

II.1 STARTING UP THE E.P.I. ACTIVITIES FUNDED FROM LOCAL RESOURCES

The start up of EPI activities was in response to long standing and repeated requests by local communities which, except a few villages, had not yet been covered by the EPI program.
Even though it had not previously undertaken health programs, the Shashqala RDC benefited from a certain number of factors which favoured the successful launching of the vaccination program.

1. The center has been working for the last two years in all the villages of the project area, and there is scarcely a household that has not benefited directly or indirectly from the material or financial inputs of the project.
   The exceptionaly detailed knowledge of local conditions thus gained by field staff, and the strong links thus forged between all the local community and the RDC have created a favourable climate for launching a mobile vaccination campaign.
2. The logistics of the RDCs, welknown in the area, made them an exceptionaly good base for the mobile vaccination teams.
3. The center was able in its first two years of work to generate sufficient services to allow a credit agency to be set up by the end of 1992. It was therefore decided that the credit agency would make funds available to cover running costs of a team of two vaccinators for one year.

In late 1992, a joint program was negotiated and set up between CoAR, responsible for the RDCs, and AVICEN, supervising the technical side of the EPI.
This program has three aims :

1. To vaccinate the target population of the southern part of Sayedabad district.

2. To employ previously trained and currently unemployed young vaccinators to carry out the program.

3. To fund the cost of vaccinators (salaries and logistics) out of savings already made by the RDC.

The first mobile vaccination campaign started in the spring of 1993 and was well-received by the local population. Up till now, 25 villages have been vaccinated by the CoAR/AVICEN team.
The EPI activities coordinated by the Shassqala RDC under the joint responsibility of CoAR and AVICEN, is a pilot experiment in Afghanistan because of the following features : its aim of reintegrating partly educated rural youths, its considerable reduction in running costs and especially its funding of the project out of local resources.
It is still too early to take a decision about a possible extension of this experiment which already aims to vaccinate 20% of the population of the Sayedabad district.
The warm welcome given by local community to the EPI and enthusiasm shown by the RDC officers have encouraged the CoAR management to propose the following three fold expansion of this experiment :

1. To develop the mobile vaccination team gradually into a mobile primary health care team, concentrating on mother and child health care.

2. To improve coordination with existing health care teams in Sayedabad and Zanakhan districts.

3. To develop an organized health information system on the basis of the mobile team working in the district primary schools, together with the Shashqala RDC training unit.

The RDC credit agency will not, however, be able to fund this expanded program, which will therefore depend initially on CoAR's ability to procure external funding. Here also, the aim will be to keep running costs at the lowest possible level, in oreder to facilitate a change over to local funding for these activities as soon as possible, with the money coming both from the RDC and the local community.

II.2 FOUNDING A SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Shashqala RDC social welfare center made its second initiative in the field of education. Since the funding of the previously described EPI activities' running costs made heavy inroads into the funds available to the social welfare center, a new and low cost experiment was set up.

Instead of supporting a new primary school, it was decided to support 9th and 10th classes at the secondary level, which were grafted onto an existing primary school.
The Shashqala school built in 1990 by the Afghan NGO ESAR, with UNESCO funds, had eight teachers for 200 students in elementary classes.

It was decided to start up two new classes, of the 9th and 10th grades, in its premices. The six teachers are all Kabul University graduates, and will work as volunteers provided by the RDC to teach different subjects daily from 14:00 to 18:00 hours.
Two full time teachers have also been employed to ensure the smooth running of the school.

The Shashqala RDC training unit is to supervise the setting up of the two classes and has authority not only over the volunteer staff but also over the full time teachers.
As soon as they were opened, the two classes contained 25 students, whose numbers should soon exceed 50. Lessons, of 45 minutes each, are given every afternoon six days per week.

Finally, it can be said that the start up of EPI activities and setting up of secondary classes by the Shashqala RDC without the help of external funding, is considered by the CoAR management as a major success and as a promising basis for future work.

Here once again, the interest shown by RDC staff and the enthusiasm shown by the local population, show that this initiative, even though still on a symbolic scale was meeting a real need.
The Shashqala RDC training unit therefore plans to open a primary and secondary education unit which will aim :

1. to supervise the running of the two secondary classes which have already been opened, in order to bring them up to final year level in the next school year.

2. to administer and supervise the work of two primary school built by the RDC, one in Sayedabad, the other in Zanakhan.

3. to establish together with a future mobile health care team a systematic health information policy in all schools in the project area.

Here also, this project can only be carried out by having recourse to external funding and technical assistance.

III. SETTING UP PROGRAMS BENEFITING WAR-WIDOWS

As previously mentioned, programs benefiting war-widows was one of the priorities which led to the founding of the social welfare centers.
Indeed, the considerable number of young widows with children to support is one of the important human problems bequeathed by the war. Even though they are largely maintained by their families, widows and their children are generally in a very precarious economic position, especially as no organized system of indemnity has yet been established in Afghanistan.

RDC officers have decided that priority should be given to funding income generating activities rather than to giving cash handouts.

It was therefore decided to start a pilot program in the two RDCs run by CoAR, Shashqala and Bakhtawar Shaheed. This program should allow feasibility studies to evaluate the impact of income generating activities for a limited number of widows jointly selected by the RDCs and the local community.

The officers of Shasqala RDC choose 25 widows in Sayedabad district and the officers of Bakhtawar Shaheed RDC choose 60 widows in the districts of Moqur, Gelan and Nawa.

After negotiating with local authorities and the beneficiaries, it was decided to concentrate aid on distributing poultry.
Indeed, is one of the main sources of revenue for women in traditional rural Afghanistan (farmyard produces).
It was therefore decided to distribute 6 chickens to each widow in order to increase her income in the mid-term.
A sum of 5,000 Afghanis was given to them to cover the initial cost of kept chickens.

The widows were asked to make a contribution of 10% of the local market rate of the chickens. Those who were unable to pay, in fact most of them, undertook to repay the RDCs in the form of fresh eggs amounting the same value as the sum owed.

Even though it is still too early to judge the mid-term effect of this program, it is nevertheless worth stating that it has a very positive impact on the local community.

The funding of these activities has been provided by IRC-RAP for the district of Sayedabad, Moqur and Gelan and by Vluchteling Stichting (S.V.) for Nawa district.

In all, this first experiment seems to have succeeded well and the offices of Shashqala and Bakhtawar Shaheed RDCs are already asking for the program to be expanded and are proposing to set up a permanent unit to ensure effective follow-up.

IV. RESTARTING SCHOOL BUILDING AND REPAIR

One the most evident needs of rural Afghanistan is the building and repair of the network of public schools. Until this last spring, CoAR had undertaken to build only one school per RDC. Recent positive developments both in the organization of the RDCs and in the relation with the local community have led to an expansion in the primary school building and repair program and to preparations being made for supervision by the training unit of each RDC.

1. Expanding the school building program.
For 1990 to 1992, CoAR was cautious with regard to the problems of education, and it was only after repeated requests by local community that it began its school building program. Even then, it was only a question of one school per RDC :

- the primary school at Gelan where building work started in August 1991 under the supervision of Bakhtawar Shaheed RDC.

- the primary school at Zanakhan where building work started in September 1992 under the supervision of Shashqala RDC.

In the spring 1993 the success of the social welfare center, including a pilot project for education, the improved organizational capacity of the RDCs and the increased demand by local communities lead CoAR to expand its school building program.

Apart from the two schools mentioned above, CoAR started building a new school in Sayedabad district in April 1993, under the responsability of the Shashqala RDC and also started repairing two other schools, one in Moqur, the other in Sayedabad.

In total, CoAR should have, by the end of 1993, built or repaired five primary schools in four districts covered by its two project areas.

2. Positive developments
The first of these positive developments is the considerable and unanimous interest now shown by the local community. Thus, for the first time, the population of the Shneez and Takya Manteqa in Sayedabad district accepted to take responsibility for one third of the building costs of the school at Takya, started by CoAR in April 1993.

The other positive development is the starting up of the training unit of the Shashqala RDC described above.

The opening of secondary level classes in the Shashqala school has a strong impact locally and the RDC has since received numerous requests from local communities to supervise existing primary schools in the project area.

The training units of the two RDCs have the following priorities for the year 1993 :

1. running the schools built or repaired by CoAR.

2. supervising existing primary school in the project area where there is a demand for such a service.

3. establishing, if possible, a secondary school in each project area.

4. setting up a basic health education system in the schools run or supervised by the RDCs.

The step by step achievement of these goals is one of the major priorities for the RDCs for the year 1993.

CONCLUSION

The successful start-up of the social welfare centers and the interest shown by RDC officers and local communities alike have led the CoAR directory board to propose a dynamic policy for setting up such centers in 1993.

These developments must however respect two principles :

- **sustainable mid-term self-funding**. The work funded by the RDCs in the field of health and education in particular must be run at minimum costs, the mid-term aim being to fund especially health costs out of local resources, that is, the RDC and the local community.

- **gradualism**. The above mentioned activities deal with areas considered sensitive by the local population and therefore need considerable tact. These two constraints explain why the setting up of these programs can be carried out only very gradualy.

In summary, the social welfare centers of the two RDCs have the following program for the year 1993 :

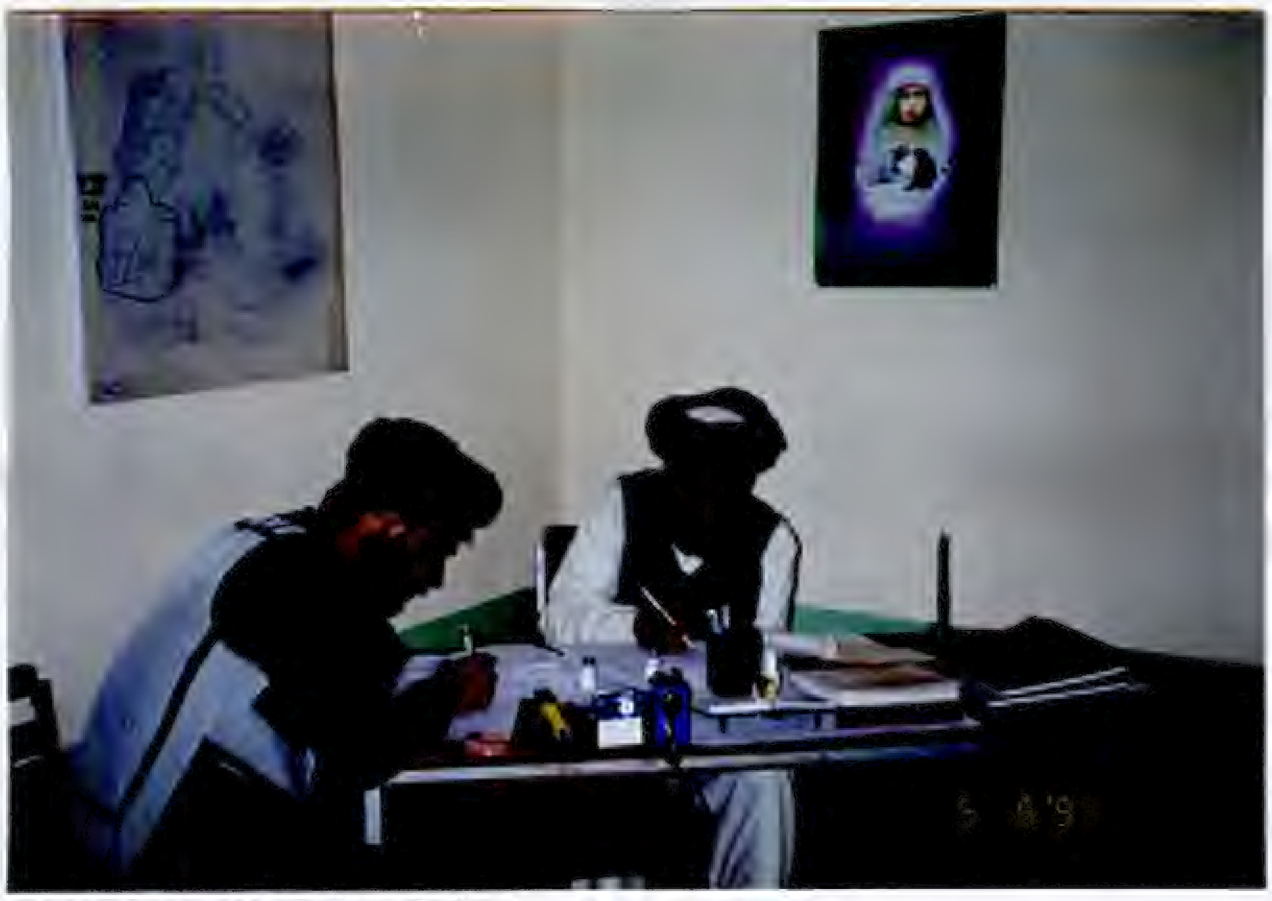
Education
1. The repair on building of 5 primary schools
2. Running the said schools and setting up one secondary school in each project area
3. Supervising other primary schools in the project area
4. Setting up a basic health education program in these schools

Health
1. Expanding vaccination to develop MCH activities for the Shashqala RDC.
2. Setting up an MCH center in Moqur for the Bakhtawar Shaheed RDC.
3. Establishing basic health education program in the schools of the project area.

Widows
1. distribution of material inputs for incoming generation.

Starting up social welfare centers of the RDCs

...a few illustrations...



EPI team, Shashqala RDC.
May 1993

SHASHQALA SCHOOLS



First students of secondary level classes.
May 1993



Indroducing the new teachers to the students
May 1993

HEALTH WORK



Vaccination session
May 1993



First visit of the AVICEN supervisor.

WAR WIDOWS' PROGRAM



Handing over chickens to help war-widows.
Nawa district. May 1993.



Gelan school. April 1993.



Developments aroud the Shashqala school.
Sayedabad, May 1993.



Bakhtawar Shaheed RDC officers and staff.
Moqur, April 1993



Shashqala RDC. The RDC officers and staff.
Sayedabad. April 1993.